

Val Wilson



## Continuing Education: If Not Now, When?

The measure of the individuals we were in high school and university and the people we are today is in the books we have read, the cultures we have seen, the people we have met along the way, and the knowledge we have acquired. Experience counts, certainly, but *learning new things on purpose* is the focus of this issue.

On International Women's Day, March 8, I had the pleasure of attending the breakfast sponsored by West Coast LEAF (West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund) at the Pan Pacific. Its President, Alisa Noda, has written for *The Scrivener* on page 50.

I sat beside a Canadian who, until recently, was a teacher in Nigeria—called the giant of Africa—for 15 years, through CUSO. One of the most polyglot countries in the world, Nigeria has a large educational network but the country is very poor. “Computers in your school?” I ventured. “No electricity,” she replied. In fact, until the teacher and the local parents took up tools, there was no school in the village. That's building education, from the ground up. The dedication of the villagers and the children was gratifying. The children wanted to learn; there were few discipline problems.

The majority of kids in Nigeria attend school, where the emphasis is on memorization—traditional rote learning. English is often their third language, and they are not necessarily literate in the first two.

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The teaching profession there is not as developed as it is here in North America, the teacher told me. Although some teachers do have degrees, the overall level of teacher training is much lower. After they are trained, teachers may not even attend classes—instead, giving notes to a student to write on the board for the other students to copy. There are few desks in the classrooms.

So in some countries, even under

challenging circumstances, students are eager to learn; they persevere, to become educated.

On this continent, our amenities enable us to be educated in comfort, yet some people don't finish school or return to learning, once they “get out.” That's when their education timeline ends, and their work life begins.

Some of those who would be first to say they support life-long learning—for themselves and others—have *The Round Tuit* attitude toward education—they will do it when they get around to it. Not now, but soon.

A recent study revealed that playing bridge and doing crossword puzzles help keep our little gray cells active. Continuing education also keeps us mentally agile. Use it or lose it?

What would you like to study? Do you have time to attend class, or would you prefer to study at home, via Internet courses? Pick a subject. The time is now. If not now, when? ▲

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